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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, May 31, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Household Questions and Answers." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, the Bureau of Biological Survey and Bureau of Entomology, U. S. D. A.

My apologies today go to the family sewing machine. I've had a letter from a lady who thinks I've been neglecting this most useful family helper.

"You've hardly mentioned the sewing machine for months," she writes me. "In all your chats on home dressmaking I think you've been slighting this good machine that does so much to save labor for us housewives and helps so much in the job of keeping the family well clad."

That's why I'm offering apologies. And that's why I'm taking some time today for a little conversation with you about your sewing machine.

If you give a good sewing machine the right care, you'll find it an excellent investment for a lifetime. But some machines have a hard time. They aren't oiled enough to work well or they're oiled too much. Some of them are allowed to get dusty and dirty until they become gummy and stiff and difficult to run. Careless housekeepers often damage them by using the wrong tension for the thickness of the material or by trying to sew with bent or blunt needles.

If you want good service and long service from your machine, care for and use it like the complex and intricate piece of machinery it is. In the first place, keep it clean. This means cleaning, not merely dusting. Take out the throat plate under the presser foot of the machine every now and then and clean out all the dust and lint that has collected in the shuttle race. Occasionally clean it with kerosene and a brush. Afterward, allow it to dry and then oil it well. And remember that if the machine is to keep clean you must keep it covered when not in use.

What about oiling? To avoid trouble follow the directions that come with the machine. All working parts should be kept thoroughly oiled. Once in a while a little oil is needed around the needle part, but you must apply it here with great care; otherwise you'll get oil on your thread or on the material you are sewing.

As I said, clean off the old oil and any dirt that clings to it with kerosene. For lubricating use good sewing machine oil which does not leave a sticky deposit on the oiled surfaces. Such a deposit makes the machine run

heavily.

By all means be sure your needle is sharp. A blunt needle makes the machine run with difficulty and is likely to damage fine materials.

Some day when you have plenty of time sit down and get acquainted with the attachments on your machine, if you aren't familiar with them already. Try them out and decide which ones will save you time. Like any other mechanical helpers, they are only labor savers when you use them well and with judgment. Take the hemmer, for example. As the hemmer does not sew close to the edge, it is chiefly useful for household items like sheets, kitchen towels, and so on. If you want a closely stitched hem, as you do on clothing, it's best to hem without this attachment. When you use an attachment like the hemmer, plan ahead and save up a good deal of the same sort of work to be done all at once when the hemmer is attached.

One of the handiest machine attachments is the gauge. This is a very simple device--just a flat metal piece turned up at one end with a screw to adjust it. You screw the gauge down on the bed of the machine and the gauge helps you sew at a desired point in a straight line. It is most useful in making parallel rows of stitching. Depend on it to help you if you are stitching brims of children's hats, for example, or stitched collars or children's clothes decorated with simple rows of stitching.

It pays to use good machine needles of the right size for the thread and for the material you're stitching. You'll find information about this printed on each package of sewing machine needles.

Every now and then somebody asks me the best way to remove the shine from woolen clothes--the shiny spots on Uncle George's trouser's or on the seat of your suit skirt or on the sleeves of your wool dress at the elbow or wherever they get the most wear. This shine that appears with wear is caused by two things--grease and the wearing off of the nap of the fabric. To remove it, sponge the material with warm water containing a little ammonia and press the garment lightly using a damp pressing cloth.

I guess I'd better answer some of the queries about summer fabrics:

"Dear Aunt Sammy," writes a listener who is interested in making her own clothes. "Dear Aunt Sammy: Will you please tell me how to shrink some linen and cotton goods that I have bought for summer dresses?"

I'm certainly glad that this lady thought of shrinking the goods before she cut out her dresses. After the dresses are made, then if they shrink, it's too late to do much but pass them on to the nearest relative who fits them. Shrink before cutting is always the safest rule in making dresses of either cotton or linen. And here's the way you do that. First, straighten the ends of the goods by cutting along the threads. Then, place the material directly into warm but not hot water. Let the material lie in the water until it is thoroughly saturated; then, without wringing it, pin it on the line and let it drip. When it is partially dry, iron it on the wrong side and--this is very important--keep both the selvage and the crosswise threads perfectly straight as you iron. Otherwise the dress may not be cut out on the straight of the goods. Good wash fabrics should launder these days without danger of their colors running. But if you are in doubt on this point or if you are a believer in safety first, try out a sample in water before you buy the material.

As for the thin summer silks, like crepe de chine, sometimes there's trouble about water spots on them. It is discouraging to put on a new silk dress for the first time and in no time have spots on it left by a slight sprinkle of rain or a splash from the kitchen sink. It's the dressing in the new fabric that causes this spotting and the dressing comes out in water. So you can prevent water spots by dipping the silk in water and then pressing it out before you cut out your dress. In this case, however, as in the case of cottons and linens, it is safest to test a small piece of the material before dipping the entire piece.

What do you think I heard about the other day? A new use for moth balls. According to the specialists over in the Bureau of Biological Survey, moth balls not only check clothes moths but also moles--those animal pests of lawns and gardens. In general, the best way to get rid of moles is to trap them. If there are only a few, however, and it doesn't seem desirable to resort to trapping, you can get good results by using moth balls. Open the runways at the edge of the lawn or garden with a trowel. Then drop in a moth ball or two--or a spoonful of naphthalene flakes. Then replace the dirt. Moles dislike the odor just as clothes moths do and this method may prove fairly effective in keeping them away from your garden.

Another interesting bit of news I learned recently is about honey. Did you know that honey is now being sold in tubes? You can squeeze it out on your bread or waffles just as you squeeze tooth paste on a brush. This will avoid the usual stickiness and the waste that occurs when honey is served from a jar or can.

The new tubes of honey vary in size from the small 1-ounce size to those holding a half pound of honey. You can squeeze out exactly the quantity you want at any one time.

This method of packaging honey has already been used to some extent in Germany. Another new development in the distribution of honey is its use in candy bars, combined with chocolate, nuts and other ingredients.

Now some predictions about the program for tomorrow. We're going to make some suggestions about repairing your house, how to keep up your property this season when some of the men of the family may have more surplus time than money on their hands. Then, there'll be the menu for a Wednesday dinner with a recipe for cheese soufflé.

